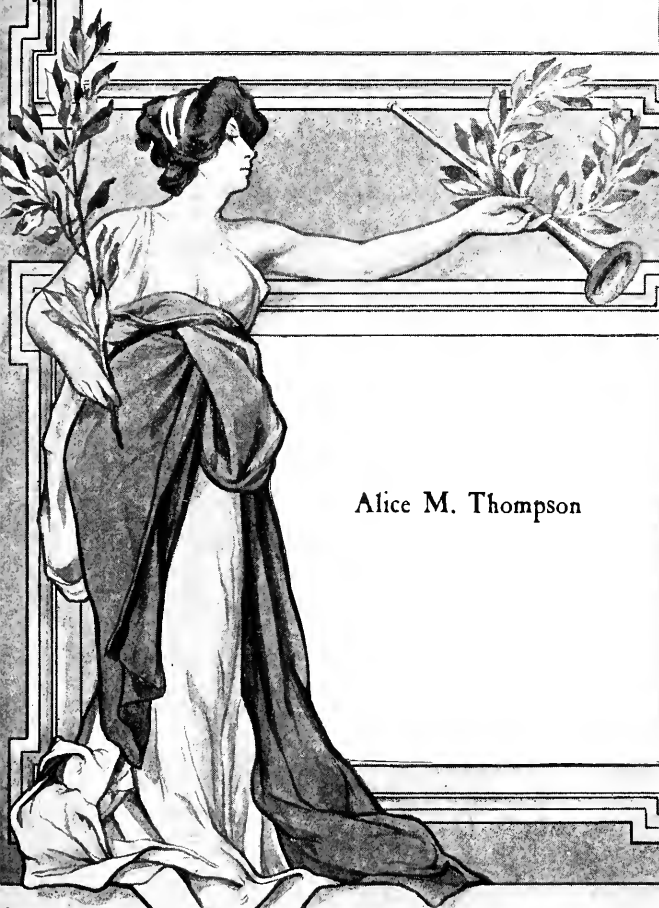


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MOLLY'S WAY



Alice M. Thompson

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MOLLY'S WAY

A Comedy in Three Acts

BY

^C
ALICE ~~M.~~ THOMPSON

Author of "THE RETURN OF LETTY,"
"HER SCARLET SLIPPERS," etc.



PHILADELPHIA
THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY
1912

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Molly's Way

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MOLLY MEADOWS	<i>With a will of her own</i>
LAURIE MEADOWS	<i>Secretly a wife</i>
MISS LAURA MEADOWS	<i>Aunt to Molly and Laurie</i>
MRS. ROSETTA WALDEN	<i>An "old flame"</i>
RUTH WALDEN	<i>Willing to love Charlie</i>
MR. EDWARD MEADOWS	<i>An irascible parent</i>
JACK LAWRENCE	<i>Who thinks Molly's all right</i>
PHILIP MOORE	<i>Laurie's husband</i>
CHARLIE CRANSTON	<i>Looking for some one to love him</i>
NAPOLÉON ALEXANDER BROWN	<i>A tuneful lover</i>

TIME OF PLAYING :—Two hours.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Molly Meadows, who is very much in love with Jack Lawrence, cannot gain her father's consent to her engagement until her older sister, Laurie, is married. Laurie is, in fact, secretly married to Philip Moore, but dares not tell her father because of an old feud, which long ago caused the erection of a "spite fence" between the Meadows and the Moore properties. Impatient Molly, fond of "her way," undertakes to cut the knot that tangles the affairs of the four young people. She and Jack elope in Mr. Meadows' touring car and come to grief in a ditch. Mr. Meadows, in catching the runaways, finds an old sweetheart, but Laurie, after an accident to Phil, confesses her marriage. Both fathers are angry, but Molly, still determined to find a way, wins over Phil's father. The old quarrel is forgotten, down comes the "spite fence," and every one is glad to see it go. A pair of old lovers, Aunt Laura and her piano tuner, Napoleon Alexander Brown, add a lively spice of fun. All the parts are good and the comedy almost plays itself.

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS

MOLLY. About twenty. Very vivacious and bright, but with an evident will of her own. Act I, summer traveling suit; motor coat and veil toward end of act. Same in Act II. Same in Act III, with change to handsome house gown.

LAURIE. About twenty-two. Rather slower and more serious than Molly. Act I, summer house gown. Act II, automobile costume. Act III, indoor costume, plain but pretty.

MISS LAURA MEADOWS. About fifty. An old maid, but not burlesque. Act I, plain house summer costume. Act II, motor costume. Act III, handsome house costume.

MRS. WALDEN. About fifty-three. Plainly but handsomely dressed. House costume in Act II, and afternoon walking or tea costume in Act III.

RUTH. About eighteen. Pretty summer house dress in Act II, and afternoon tea costume in Act III.

MR. MEADOWS. About fifty-five. Rather peppery. Wears glasses. Business suit in Act I. Motor costume in Act II. Outdoor summer costume in Act III; all suitable for a gentleman getting past middle age.

JACK. About twenty-five. Summer suit and straw hat in Act I, with motor coat and cap at end of act. Same in Act II. Summer afternoon suit, hat, and cane in Act III. Well dressed throughout.

PHILIP. About twenty-five. Summer business suit or a riding-suit in Act I. Light summer suit, or blue coat and white flannel trousers in Act III, with bandage on head and arm in sling.

CHARLIE. About twenty-five. Business summer suit in Act I, and carries motor coat and cap. Same in Act II. Afternoon costume in Act III. Well dressed throughout.

NAPOLEON ALEXANDER BROWN. A tall, thin man of fifty. Wears shabby long coat and old-fashioned hat. Flower in buttonhole at first entrance in Acts I and III. His whole costume and manner speaks of "genteel poverty," while it is evident he was once a dandy.

PROPERTIES

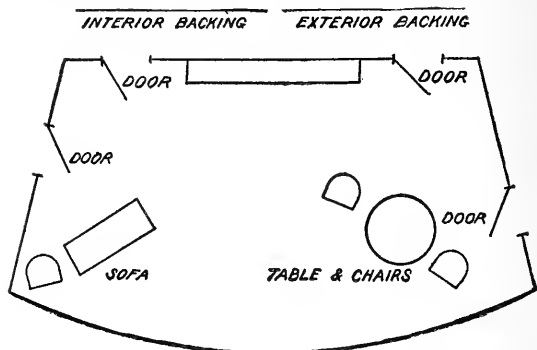
ACT I.—Knitting materials, a newspaper, a letter, a cigar case, a box of candy, a large piece of paper or cardboard bearing message, a hand bell.

ACT II.—Flowers, box containing bracelet and card, a book, a gentleman's visiting card, a blue paper, supposed to be a summons.

ACT III.—An iced cake, napkin, a small bouquet of flowers, a suit-case, a ring in box, six letters.

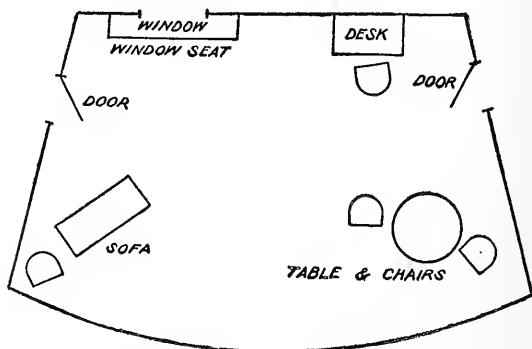
SCENE PLOTS

ACTS I AND III



SCENE.—Sitting-room in Mr. Meadows' country home. A large sofa and chairs, r. Table covered with a cloth, and an armchair, L. c. A door opens R. c. into room or passage, another L. c. into garden or verandah. Entrances up R. and down L.

ACT II



SCENE.—Parlor in Mrs. Rosetta Walden's house. Entrances L. and R. At R. c. is a lounge and chairs, down L. c. a table, on it a vase of flowers and a book. At L. back a small writing desk. At R. back a window. At L. an alcove or hall with door opening in.

Molly's Way

ACT I

SCENE.—*Sitting-room in Mr. MEADOWS' country home on Long Island, N. Y.*

(*At rise* MR. M. and MISS LAURA MEADOWS discovered. *She knits beside table. MR. M. reads a paper.*)

MISS M. What was it you were going to speak to me about, Edward?

MR. M. (*dropping paper*). To speak to you about—oh, yes, I remember; it's about the girls.

MISS M. The girls? Laurie is not causing you any uneasiness, is she?

MR. M. Oh, no, no, Laurie never gives any trouble.

MISS M. Then it's little Molly.

MR. M. Well, yes, it is Molly, and yet in a way it's both of them. Laura, you have been a mother to my children since their own mother died. Their interests are yours, I know. Now, I want you to help me. You know how I managed Agnes and Matilda.

MISS M. I know how Fate managed for you.

MR. M. Nonsense! It was all my doing. When my girls were growing up I decided that they should marry according to their age.

MISS M. You were very fortunate in finding husbands for them just as you wanted them.

MR. M. System, my dear, system. Matilda was spoken for first, you remember, but I was very firm with Gordon; very firm. I replied, No sir, Matilda is younger than Agnes. She cannot marry first.

MISS M. And Gordon went away at once and brought Mr. Claude Whitney, who had admired Agnes at a dance. So we had two weddings in a year. Oh, it worked admir-

ably that time! But I wonder if you could pursue the same policy with Jack Lawrence.

MR. M. (*rising*). Jack Lawrence! That boy! But I won't allow Molly to marry him. And Laurie, who is nearly three years older, not even engaged. It's ridiculous.

MISS M. Jack is a nice boy. Just like my own nephew. He always calls me Aunt Laura.

MR. M. Before Jack tries to manage a wife he had better learn how to manage an automobile.

MISS M. I thought Jack could do almost anything.

MR. M. (*rising*). He can do more damage in a short time than any one I ever knew. I let him drive the run-about the other day, and he ran into McCrackin's cow, jumped the fence, and got on the railroad track just in time for the Bayside express. Of course he escaped, but he injured the cow and smashed the motor to bits.

MISS M. Why, I heard nothing about it.

MR. M. No, I didn't tell Molly. Somehow or other the fellow got me to promise to keep mum about it. But he shan't marry Molly—not until her older sister is settled. Laurie is an attractive girl.

MISS M. Philip Moore seems to think so.

MR. M. Moore? Does she see anything of him?

MISS M. Of course. Next door neighbors since they were children; what can you expect? Don't be hard on Philip. He is not responsible for his grandparents' sins.

MR. M. He has the same blood. No daughter of mine shall have anything to do with a grandson of Samuel Moore.

MISS M. It seems a pity to keep up the bad feeling for so many years. I would gladly give up an acre or two of land.

MR. M. Land! It was not only a question of the land. It was a principle! We refused to be robbed, that's all.

MISS M. All the same I'm sorry father ever went to law about it, especially as he lost. It's so uncomfortable to be on bad terms with neighbors. And you are wealthy, Edward. You can afford to forget it.

MR. M. I'll never forget it. As to wealth—Sam Moore is wealthier than I am. My, my, I remember as if it was yesterday when father brought the news he had lost the suit. I had been over at Sam's; we were both nineteen years of age and had been chums from babyhood, you might say.

MISS M. Ah, yes, I remember. I was several years

younger—just a child, but I heard him forbid you to speak to Sam again. (*Goes to door L. C. and points off.*) That ugly fence! There it has been ever since. I fairly hate that fence. I remember that day as well as if it was a month ago. Rosetta Walden was staying with us.

MR. M. Poor Rosetta! She is nothing but a memory. I don't suppose I'd know her if I met her. By the way, didn't she marry?

MISS M. Of course. You don't suppose an attractive girl like Rosetta would remain single all her life because you and she quarreled over an old fence. She told you some plain truths, Edward. Of course she married.

MR. M. I wonder where she is living.

MISS M. I haven't the least idea.

MR. M. I haven't thought of her for years. What brought her back to your mind, Laura?

MISS M. The fence, of course. I was noticing this morning how shaky it is getting; and that reminded me of the day it was put up. I've never seen Rosetta since.

MR. M. And I never spoke to Sam again. Now you see how impossible it would be for any member of my family to be friendly with Sam's son. It's to be hoped Laurie hasn't seen much of him. Is he at home now?

MISS M. He has been away for two months with his father, in Washington, I believe. You know Sam Moore has lived there for the past five years.

MR. M. Yes, I know.

MISS M. Oh, Edward, before you shadow any young hearts, do not let us forget Napoleon Brown.

MR. M. Napoleon Brown! Never heard of the fellow.

MISS M. Can you have forgotten? Think! Perhaps you will recall him if I add his middle name—also a distinguished one—Alexander. We always called him Alexander.

MR. M. Napoleon Alexander Brown. Come, that sounds more familiar. It seems to conjure up a tall, loose-legged, lean-faced chap with ——

MISS M. A fine, handsome, soldierly man with the brow of a commander and the eyes of an eagle. He conquered wherever he went.

MR. M. Napoleon Alexander. Two fine names, and his own was just Brown—just plain Brown.

MISS M. (*musingly*). Yes, just plain dark Brown.

MR. M. Ah, yes, I remember. Why, Laura, you were engaged to him.

MISS M. I was, and we would have been married, but unfortunately Napoleon took father out in a rowboat and upset him, just for fun, in four feet of water.

MR. M. And so he met his Waterloo.

MISS M. (*rising*). Poor Alexander, he had a keen sense of humor, but nobody shared it.

MR. M. Least of all father, that time.

MISS M. He gave him just half an hour to get out of the village. But I have never forgotten him. (*Sighs.*) He may be married now, he may be dead, which would be better, but his voice, his face, his beautiful clothes—you remember how well dressed he always was—are green in my memory yet. Now when you are dealing with your daughters' love affairs, remember Napoleon Alexander Brown. You don't want Laurie to pine and fade away.

MR. M. Tut, you didn't pine and fade. I don't believe you lost a pound of flesh over that affair.

MISS M. You wrong me, Edward. My weight was decreased by at least one pound and three-quarters in a fortnight, I remember. I never touched candy for ten days. Oh, I felt it bitterly! Here is Laurie coming. Don't be harsh with her. Remember Napoleon Alexander Brown.

(*Enter LAURIE MEADOWS, L. She walks slowly, reading letter.*)

LAURIE. How do you spell irrevocable, with one r or two, father?

MISS M. Whatever do you want with such a big word as that, Laurie?

LAURIE. I'm writing. Oh, nothing.

MR. M. Come here, my dear child. (*LAURIE goes to him.*) Your aunt and I have been talking matters over. Now we want to say something to you.

MISS M. We, Edward?

MR. M. Certainly; I expect your coöperation, Laura.

LAURIE. What is it?

MR. M. Don't be alarmed, Laurie. You have always been a good, dutiful child. You have never done anything to displease me. I would like to see you happily married. We both would, indeed, before we die.

MISS M. Oh, Edward, don't talk of dying.

MR. M. Well, well, I'll leave you out of that, Laura.
(*To LAURIE.*) If there is any one you care for —

LAURIE. Only Philip.

MR. M. (*harshly*). You mean Philip Moore?

LAURIE. Yes.

MR. M. I can never consent to that.

LAURIE (*rising*). Father!

MR. M. You must not think of it. You must not see him.

LAURIE. Oh, you are unjust to him.

MISS M. Oh, don't let us have any scenes, please. My nerves cannot stand them. And here is Molly coming. Don't let her think we are disagreeing.

(*Enter MOLLY MEADOWS, L. C.*)

MOLLY. Father, come for a sail. And you, Aunt Laura, all of you—come. The wind is just right. I've got the boat ready.

MR. M. Presently, dear. But I want to speak to you first. Now I don't wish to frighten you.

(*MOLLY sits beside him.*)

MOLLY (*in mock alarm*). And I'm so easily frightened. Oh, what is it?

MR. M. Just this—you cannot think of getting married until Laurie is settled.

MOLLY (*jumping*). Who said I ever thought of getting married?

LAURIE. I'm so relieved.

MOLLY (*to LAURIE*). And who said I didn't?

MR. M. Well, you know my ideas on the subject?

MOLLY. Oh, yes. The eldest daughter must be married first, then the second, and then the third, and then the fourth, and then the fifth, and then the sixth and the seventh and the eighth —

MISS M. Oh, stop, stop! Do you want to give people the impression that you have a regiment of sisters older than yourself?

MOLLY. It would require a lot of father's system, eh?

MR. M. I am quite in earnest, Molly, thoroughly in earnest. It isn't right that a younger sister should marry before an older one. You know how I arranged it for Agnes

and Matilda. Well, I intend to follow out the same plan with you two girls.

MOLLY. It's rather hard on Laurie.

LAURIE. Indeed it is.

MOLLY. And it's very hard on me. But don't let us worry about it; you may have us with you for years to come, ten, twenty, thirty.

LAURIE. Heaven forbid!

MOLLY. You may have us forever.

MR. M. That's not likely. But you understand me, I'm sure. Come, now, we'll go down to the boat-house.

LAURIE. I will join you in half an hour, father. I have a letter to write.

MR. M. Perhaps you'd like to show it to me when it's finished. I know you write very interesting letters, Laurie. Come, Laura, you'll go with me.

MISS M. Certainly, Edward.

MOLLY. And I am going to get a shady hat. Expect me in five minutes. (*Exeunt Miss M. and Mr. M., L. C.*) Don't worry, Laurie. It will all come out right in the end.

LAURIE. I hope so. Oh, I do hope so. If I could only tell you, Molly. If I could explain. Don't mind me if I seem to act a little strangely. I think my nerves are upset.

MOLLY. Oh, buck up, Laurie, and go in for a swim. Or better still, go fishing.

(*MOLLY laughs and exits L. LAURIE draws a letter from her waist and kisses it.*)

(*Enter PHILIP MOORE, R.*)

LAURIE. Philip, you back again!

PHILIP. My wife!

LAURIE. Oh, hush, Philip. How did you dare come here? No one must suspect.

PHILIP. I came in the back way. So it's still our secret?

LAURIE. Oh, yes, I haven't told a soul. And I'm in fear all the time that it will be suddenly found out. How strange it seems to have been married for over two months and still be called Miss Laurie Meadows.

PHILIP. It's not right. We must end this silence, and you shall take my name before the whole world.

LAURIE. No, not yet, Phil. I have just had the most awful interview with father.

PHILIP. Poor darling ! What did he say ?

LAURIE. Perfectly dreadful things. He nearly broke my heart. In the first place he forbids me to have anything to do with you.

PHILIP. If he only knew !

LAURIE. But I can't tell him yet. You know I'm not of age.

PHILIP. You will be in three months.

LAURIE. How remorseful I felt. He said I had never displeased him. And oh, Philip, think what I've done !

PHILIP. We ought to tell him. You know, Laurie, we can't keep this pretense up much longer. I can see you only in stolen interviews—you, who ought to be presiding over my house.

LAURIE. Is there any hope of a house, dear ? Were you successful in that business ?

PHILIP. No. To get a partnership I need eight thousand dollars. It's a splendid chance, an old established firm. If I could only get hold of that money.

LAURIE. Your own money —

PHILIP. Oh, you know the conditions under which my grandfather left it. That it should be mine if I married according to my father's wishes. Otherwise it is to go to the Soldiers' Home. The old gentleman must have had premonitions, I think.

LAURIE. And your father knows nothing of our marriage ?

PHILIP. No, indeed. When he does know, I suppose he'll disinherit me, too.

LAURIE. Oh, isn't it dreadful that our fathers should be such enemies ? Can't you borrow the money somewhere ? — Jack Lawrence —

PHILIP. Poor old Jack ! Yes, he'd lend it in a minute if he had it ; but I don't believe he owns a hundred dollars.

LAURIE. And I do want you to succeed. Father might be more inclined to forgive us then—I mean if he thought you had already done something worth while.

PHILIP. And I've done nothing worth while, darling, except win you. There's some one coming ! I must go. It wouldn't do to be caught here. Can't you meet me in town to-morrow, and we'll lunch together ?

LAURIE. Yes, I can manage it, I think. How would the twelve-fifteen train do ?

PHILIP. Very well. I'll go to the ferry. Good-bye, darling. (*Kisses her.*)

(*Exit PHILIP, R.*)

(*Enter MOLLY, L. C. She wears a big shady hat with flowers.*)

MOLLY. I thought you were writing a letter.

LAURIE. Oh, I forgot all about it. I'll go now.

(*Exit R.*)

(*Enter JACK LAWRENCE, L. C.*)

JACK. Molly! (*Goes to her with arms out.*)

MOLLY. No, you can't kiss me to-day.

JACK. Why not?

MOLLY. Because it's all off with us, Jack.

JACK. Are you going to throw me over?

MOLLY. Not I, but dad. Yes, Jack, he has issued a command, and he won't alter it for any one. It is that the elder daughter must be married first. I cannot even be engaged until I have seen Laurie depart respectably in a four wheeler and a shower of confetti.

JACK. Oh, pshaw! That's absolute rot. What do other people do?

MOLLY. Other people marry in a hit and miss style and repent at leisure. We have a system of our own.

JACK. As if falling in love has anything to do with system.

MOLLY. System will do wonders. Look how we settled the others. First we married Agnes, then Matilda. Laura is the next one upon whom the fatal lot has fallen.

JACK. Molly, stop fooling, and listen to me a minute.

(*They sit R.*)

MOLLY. I'm not fooling. If you don't believe me go and ask father.

JACK. No, thank you. I don't want to be put through a catechism until I can answer a few questions in the affirmative. Have you any prospects? No prospects but Molly. Then have you any ambition? No ambition but to marry Molly. After that, you'll see —

MOLLY. Isn't it your own fault that you have no

prospects? Two weeks ago your Uncle Jack offered you a splendid position and salary and you gave it up. Why——

JACK. For your sake, because it meant going out west for six months. I couldn't go that far and leave you.

MOLLY. Six months would soon pass, and then you'd be in a position to marry. Oh, it was foolish of you, Jack! But won't he give you another chance?

JACK. No, I'm sure he won't. He was furious at my refusing. He doesn't understand.

MOLLY. I wish I could meet your uncle. I think I could make him understand. Isn't his office in that Burton Building on Broadway?

JACK. Yes. But what's the use of thinking of that? I'll get out and find something for myself. Here we've been engaged for two months—and it seems like a year.

MOLLY. A year! How very complimentary to me.

JACK (*hastily*). A year in heaven!

MOLLY. Ah, that's better. Do you know, I dreamt of you last night. I dreamt we were married——

JACK. Molly!

MOLLY. Yes, and living in that dear little bungalow at Woodside.

JACK. If I had twelve hundred dollars I'd buy that bungalow to-morrow.

MOLLY. Why not to-day?

JACK. Yes, to-day. And we'd get married and go and live there and be happy forever and ever.

MOLLY. How I'd love a bungalow.

JACK. Then promise me——

MOLLY. No stairs to go up——

JACK. Listen, Molly——

MOLLY. No stairs to go down. And I could jump into the back yard from my bedroom window.

JACK. Just you and I——

MOLLY. And into the front yard from the parlor. Oh, yes, we must, must live in a bungalow.

JACK. Then persuade your father to let us marry. I'll borrow the money.

MOLLY. It's no use, Jack. He won't hear of it. No wedding bells for me.

JACK. We must do something.

MOLLY. Oh, what can we do? Oh, if I only had my way—— If only Laurie were engaged, even——

JACK. Well, what about Philip Moore?

MOLLY. Father would never hear of him, and anyway I believe Phil has gone back on poor Laurie. I know he used to like her, but he has been away for over two months, and as far as I know he hasn't written to her.

JACK. Why, I met him at the gate just now.

MOLLY. You did! Did he tell you he was in love with Laurie?

JACK. No; he asked me to lend him a hundred.

MOLLY. Laurie is a dear girl. Fate ought to treat her kindly.

JACK. Perhaps Fate needs a little assistance.

MOLLY (*sitting up suddenly*). I have an idea. I think I could work it. Will you leave it to me?

JACK. I'll leave everything to you!

MOLLY. Yes, let me have my own way in this. I'm tired of waiting. So are you. Jack, go down to the boat-house, and I will join you there in a little while. I—am expecting a caller.

JACK. All right. But remember—no flirting. I'll cut across the lawn. I left my hat there.

(*Exit, L. C.*)

(*Enter PHILIP, R.*)

PHILIP. Hello, Molly! Did I leave a cigar case here?

MOLLY. Oh, hello! I dare say you did. I notice men are very forgetful. When did you get back?

PHILIP. Last night. Ah, here it is. (*Picks up case.*)

MOLLY. Philip—I want to speak to you a minute. It seems to me only sisterly to tell you that Laurie thinks a great deal of you.

PHILIP. Molly, are you sure of that?

MOLLY. Reasonably sure. And Laurie is such a nice girl. She can cook (*checking off on fingers*), play, sew buttons on shirts, sing, darn stockings and keep her temper. Oh, she's an angel.

PHILIP. I'm so glad you appreciate her. But if I took her away—such a paragon—how could you get on without her?

MOLLY. I'd do my best—if it was for her good. Oh, but you must think me a little hypocrite. Don't you see,

Phil? Father won't let me be engaged even until Laurie is married, so the sooner she goes off the better for me.

PHILIP. I see. Well, if you can, win over your father to think of me as you do. In the meantime—thanks for the hint. Good-bye, little sister.

(Exit PHILIP, L. C., *laughing*. MOLLY looks after him rather crestfallen.)

MOLLY. He doesn't care for her after all!

(A knock R. C. Enter CHARLIE CRANSTON. He carries a candy box.)

CHARLIE. Good-afternoon, Molly.

MOLLY. Oh, Charlie! You are the very person I was just longing to see.

CHARLIE. I'm lucky.

MOLLY. And what do you think? I dreamt about you last night.

CHARLIE (*eagerly*). You did! What did you dream?

MOLLY (*seeing the box*). I dreamt you brought me a box of candy.

CHARLIE (*giving it*). And here it is.

MOLLY. Oh, thank you. I wish all my dreams would come true. (*They sit together. MOLLY opens box.*)

CHARLIE. Perhaps I can make them come true.

MOLLY. Perhaps you can. There is one specially—oh, it's a beautiful dream. (*Sighs.*)

CHARLIE. Tell it to me, Molly.

MOLLY (*sighing*). Oh, dear!

CHARLIE (*taking her hand*). Come, tell me what is worrying you. Perhaps I can help you.

MOLLY. Yes, you might be able to. I will confide in you, Charlie. I'm quite unhappy.

CHARLIE. Who's been annoying you? Just let me get hold of him.

MOLLY. Nobody in particular. All my trouble is caused by the fact that Laurie is neither married nor engaged.

CHARLIE. But why should you care? Don't you get on together?

MOLLY. Oh, yes. It isn't that. But father won't hear of me getting married until Laurie is safely bestowed upon some one. Try one of these chocolates. They're great.

CHARLIE. And you—want to get married?

MOLLY. Yes, Jack and I. I suppose you guessed it.

CHARLIE (*gravely*). Well, I knew you were good friends, but no, I can't say I guessed that, Molly.

MOLLY (*slyly*). Now what can I do to get Laurie married?

CHARLIE. I hope you're not hinting, my dear little Molly.

MOLLY. Laurie's an attractive girl.

CHARLIE. I always thought so.

MOLLY. And she makes the best waffles I ever tasted. The man who'll sit in front of a pile of those waffles at the breakfast table with Laurie pouring his coffee in a pink dimity is very lucky.

CHARLIE. But so few men take their coffee in pink dimity. Now I prefer a cup myself.

MOLLY. Do be serious, Charlie.

CHARLIE. Well, then, seriously, I believe Phil Moore is in love with Laurie.

MOLLY. Do you really think there is anything in that? I wish I knew. But Laurie never tells me anything. She's so reserved. But you're such an old friend of ours. She might confide in you. Try and pump her.

CHARLIE. So you want me to find out if she's in love with Phil?

MOLLY. Yes. Have a peppermint. (*Offers box.*)

CHARLIE. All right, I'll find out. But I'll have to go about it carefully. I think Laurie trusts me. Do you want me to find out to-day?

MOLLY. As early as possible. And then you'll stay and spend the evening with us, won't you?

CHARLIE. Not to-night, thanks. I've promised to go and see some friends—the Waldens, who have recently moved here. I met them abroad.

MOLLY. Ah! Old ladies?

CHARLIE. The daughter isn't. (*Smiles.*)

MOLLY. Dear nie! Pretty?

CHARLIE. Quite pretty.

MOLLY. Ah—I see. Have a piece of nougat. (*Offers box.*) Here comes Laurie. I'll go, and give you a fair field. But I'll come back in five minutes.

(*Exit MOLLY, down L.*)

(*Enter LAURIE, R.*)

LAURIE. Good-afternoon, Charlie.

CHARLIE. How do you do, Laurie? I was just going to look for you.

LAURIE. To look for me, Charlie?

(*Gives her hand and smiles brightly.*)

CHARLIE. I'd like to speak to you for a moment.

LAURIE. Certainly. Of course it's about Molly.

(*They sit.*)

CHARLIE. No, it's not about Molly this time. It's about you. Laurie, we've known each other for a good many years. And you know—you must know that I've always thought a great deal of you, Laurie—of you and Molly. I'd like to see you happy.

LAURIE (*looking down*). Thank you. But it is hard to be happy sometimes.

CHARLIE. Confide in me, Laurie. Perhaps I can help you.

LAURIE. Oh, can you?

CHARLIE. Let me try. Is there—some one you love?
(*Takes her hand.*) May I —

LAURIE. Oh, yes, there is. (*Rises.*) Poor Charlie! I'm so sorry. I had no idea you thought of me in this way. You do me a great honor.

CHARLIE. But, Laurie —

LAURIE. Oh, I must be truthful even if I seem unkind. I cannot give you any hope.

CHARLIE. You misunderstand me, Laurie —

(*Enter NAPOLEON ALEXANDER BROWN, R. C.*)

BROWN. Good-afternoon. This is Mr. Edward Meadows' house, is it not? May I speak with Miss Meadows?

LAURIE. I am Miss Meadows.

BROWN. Miss Laura Meadows?

LAURIE. Yes, that is my name.

BROWN. Laura! It is you. And still "Miss," after all these years. (*Goes to her precipitately.*) Why, you don't look a day older than when we parted twenty years ago!

LAURIE. I don't understand you, sir. Twenty years ago I was an infant.

BROWN. But you are Miss Meadows—Miss Laura Meadows. And you don't remember me?

LAURIE. I have never seen you before in my life.

BROWN. Incredible! I, your old friend, Napoleon Alexander Brown?

(Enter MOLLY, L.)

MOLLY. Oh, Mr. Brown! Have you come back at last? I'll go and find Aunt Laura.

BROWN. And who is this?

LAURIE. My sister Molly. Fancy your taking me for Aunt Laura. *(Laughs.)* You surely must have thought time had stopped for her.

(Laughs and talks with him. CHARLIE goes to MOLLY.)

MOLLY. What did you find out, Charlie?

CHARLIE. That it's better not to meddle in other people's affairs. Laurie thought I was proposing to her, and without giving me a chance to explain, at once refused me.

MOLLY. Laurie refused you! Oh, the ungrateful girl!

CHARLIE. This is my first experience of the kind. *(Smiles.)* But don't tell her. She feels sorry for me, and after all that's something. Now after making such a brilliant blunder I think it's time for me to go. Good-bye.

MOLLY. Oh, poor Charlie! I'm sorry for you too. Good-bye.

(CHARLIE looks back with mock tragedy and exits R. C.)

LAURIE. Yes, now I remember, sir, that my aunt has spoken of you.

MOLLY. Of course she has. I knew your name at once. Here's Aunt Laura coming. I wonder if you will think her altered.

(Enter Miss M., L. C.)

Miss M. Molly, dear, your father and I couldn't wait for you.

BROWN. That voice! *(Turns. Miss M. looks fixedly at him.)* Am I addressing Miss Meadows?

Miss M. Yes, I am Miss Meadows.

BROWN. At last! Still "Miss," after all these years. Oh, the fidelity of woman!

MISS M. Who are you? (*Goes nearer.*) Napoleon Alexander Brown. I believe you have come back!

BROWN. I have come back.

MISS M. (*extending both hands*). Oh, Alexander!

BROWN. My long lost Laura!

MISS M. I knew you would remain faithful to me. These are my nieces. They have heard me speak of you—perhaps not frequently, but always with respect.

BROWN. I have had the pleasure of meeting them already. I am a married man, Laura.

MISS M. (*stepping back*). Heavens! Why did you not tell me this at first?

BROWN (*wiping his eyes with a scarlet handkerchief*). And a widower.

MISS M. Ah, that puts a different complexion on the matter. What is your profession, Alexander?

BROWN. Oh, I am a musician.

MISS M. A musician? Have you any pupils?

BROWN. No, I don't take pupils.

MISS M. Oh, you only play at concerts.

BROWN. No—I—I play only to very limited audiences.

MISS M. Classical music, I suppose.

BROWN. No, my own compositions. I make 'em up as I go along; improvise, I think they call it.

MISS M. Oh, Alexander, I always knew you were a genius. But do come and see my brother Edward. He'll be so pleased to meet you again. I assure you he has never forgotten you.

(*Exeunt L. C. LAURIE and MOLLY run to door and look after them.*)

LAURIE. So that's Aunt Laura's youthful romance come back in person. (*Laughs.*)

MOLLY. Wouldn't it be funny if she married him—if she married before either of us?

LAURIE. It would be funny, but it's impossible—quite impossible. Poor, poor Charlie!

(*Exit, R.*)

(*MOLLY laughs and is still laughing when JACK enters L. C.*)

JACK. What's the joke, Molly? Have you been so successful that your spirits have gone away up?

MOLLY. I haven't succeeded in doing one thing I want

to do. I'm afraid I shall be neither a bridesmaid nor a bride. (*Stamps her foot.*) Ah, if I had my way!

JACK. You usually do, Molly. If you had your way now would you marry me, Molly?

MOLLY. Yes.

JACK (*eagerly*). At once?

MOLLY. How absurd! Yes, I would, though.

JACK. Come on, then!

MOLLY. You don't mean it!

JACK. I do. Elope with me—right now. Show them they can't put us off indefinitely this way.

MOLLY (*after a pause*). Oh, Jack, I believe I will. But father —

JACK. Your father will forgive us. And Aunt Laura is on our side. She told me herself her sympathies are with us.

MOLLY. And they ought to be more than ever with us, because her old friend Mr. Napoleon Alexander Brown has come back, and I wouldn't be surprised if she marries him.

JACK. So he's come back? Upon my word! That may help or it may hinder our plans. But if we wait for Laurie we may wait a hundred and twenty years.

MOLLY. It looks like it.

JACK. Come, Molly. There's no time like the present.

MOLLY. What are we going to live on?

JACK. You ask me that? And I love you so.

MOLLY. It was heartless of me. Forgive me, Jack. Yes (*looking around furtively*), I'll go with you. I see no other way out. Wait until I get some things—no, go and bring the car out of the garage while I'm getting ready.

JACK. Your father's car? Oh, I hardly like to do that.

MOLLY. Aren't you taking father's property when you take me, and the most valuable thing he has? You can't replace me, but you can buy an automobile any day—if you have the money. And we'll return it when empty.

JACK. But honestly, Molly, I don't know very much about motors. I hate to admit it, but —

MOLLY. Then it's time you learned. I'll show you how to run it. The runabout is all smashed—some idiot who didn't know the first thing about driving a car took it out a few days ago.

JACK. Yes, he didn't know any more about them than I do.

MOLLY. So we'll have to take the touring car. We can motor to New York and bring it back to-morrow when we're married. Won't it be fun? Hurry up. Jack. Put on father's dust-coat; you'll find it in the car, I think.

JACK. Well, if I'm to take you and the touring car I won't draw the line at a dust-coat.

(Exit, R. C. Exit MOLLY, L.)

(Enter MR. M. and MISS M., L. C. They come down C.)

MR. M. Laura, this is very strange—Alexander Brown turning up again.

MISS M. It seems like Fate, Edward.

MR. M. He appears to be—well, not very heavily laden with this world's goods.

MISS M. Geniuses never make money. One can't expect it. He is a composer, you know.

MR. M. Would you like to ask him to dinner, my dear?

MISS M. Oh, very much, Edward.

MR. M. He looks as if a dinner would do him good. Where is he?

MISS M. Sitting under the trees in the garden. I think he would appreciate an invitation from you, Edward.

MR. M. Very well. I'll go and ask him. And how do you think he'd like a motor ride afterward? He looks as if he'd never been in a motor.

MISS M. It's very kind of you. That would be too charming.

MR. M. Ask Laurie to go out and tell John to have the car ready in an hour, then.

(Exit MISS M., R., and MR. M., L. C.)

(Enter MOLLY, L. Reënter JACK wearing motor coat and cap. MOLLY wears long motor coat and veil and carries a large piece of paper cardboard under her arm.)

MOLLY. Jack, I'm all ready. Where is the car?

JACK. Hush, I took it down the road a piece, so no one will see us. What's that you've got?

MOLLY. It's a note. It's the proper thing to leave a note. Eloping couples always do—at least the girl does.

(Pins note to table-cover R. so it is visible to audience.)

JACK. You hardly need to issue a public proclamation, you know. (*Reads aloud.*)

"JACK AND I HAVE
ELOPED TO NEW YORK.

"MOLLY."

MOLLY. I couldn't bear to go without giving them some kind of clue. They'd be so worried.

JACK. They won't catch us. Now, darling, where are your other things?

MOLLY. What other things?

JACK. Why, it's customary, it's quite usual, I believe, for brides to have some clothes, something in a toilet bag, a hair brush or a button-hook —

MOLLY. Oh, I don't need a button-hook. I can buy anything I really need in New York.

JACK. Well, come then. We must get there and be married before dinner.

MOLLY. Good-bye, my old home. When next I see you my name won't be Molly Meadows.

(*Exeunt, R. C.*)

(*Enter MISS M., R.*)

MISS M. Molly!—Oh, I thought I heard Molly here. Where is she, I wonder? (*Goes L.*)

(*Enter LAURIE, R.*)

LAURIE. Father! Father! Oh, Aunt Laura! What do you think?

MISS M. What is it, Laurie?

LAURIE. I went out to the garage to tell John about the motor, and it's gone.

MISS M. Gone—the touring car? Then John must have taken it out.

LAURIE. No, John's there. He seemed perfectly astonished. He says some one has stolen it.

MISS M. This is dreadful. But possibly your father, not seeing John around, may have taken it out himself. I'll ask him.

LAURIE (*seeing card on table-cover*). What's this? Oh, Aunt Laura, look, look! "Jack and I have eloped. Molly."

MISS M. Eloped. Our little Molly. Never. Oh, call your father. Ring the bell. (*LAURIE rings bell frantic-*

ally, L. C.) Whom has she gone with? Jack — How dare he? Give me that card, Laurie. Let me read it again. Let me make sure. Yes, here it is. "Jack and I have eloped to New York. Molly." (*Sits down heavily.*)

(*Enter BROWN, L. C. MISS M. runs to him.*)

MISS M. (*frantically*). Oh, Alexander, have you seen Molly?

BROWN. Yes.

MISS M. When? Where? Tell me, quick.

BROWN. Here in this room, not long ago.

MISS M. But not since then?

BROWN. Oh, no.

(*MISS M. sits down again.*)

(*Enter MR. M., L. C.*)

MR. M. Laura, my touring car is stolen—my best and most expensive motor!

MISS M. And your youngest child.

MR. M. What!

LAURIE (*showing card*). Look, look! (*He seizes it.*)

MR. M. "Jack and I have eloped to New York. Molly." The scoundrel! I should never have trusted him. How dare he abuse my confidence, my hospitality? My sweet Molly!

MISS M. I see it all now. They've eloped in the touring car.

MR. M. That boy in a sixty horse power machine! Think of it! And he doesn't know the first thing about motors. I'll go after them at once.

MISS M. I'll go with you.

LAURIE. And I. We can take the train to Long Island City and hire a motor there.

MISS M. Come, Alexander, you'll not desert us?

BROWN. No, I'd like a motor ride.

MR. M. My motor car's gone. Molly's gone. Jack's gone. Everything's gone. This is Molly's doing. That young Lawrence never would have had the spunk to think of it. Wait till I catch Molly. I'll show her! Come on!

(*Exit, R. C., followed by others.*)

ACT II

SCENE.—*Parlor in MRS. WALDEN'S house. Time, the same evening.*

(RUTH WALDEN discovered at rise bending over table, on which she arranges flowers in vase. Takes a bracelet and card from box.)

RUTH. Oh! (*Reads card.*) "From mother. Many happy returns of the day." (*Slips bracelet on arm, picks up book and reads.*) "Miss Ruth Walden, with the compliments of Charles Cranston." Charles Cranston. (*Musingly.*) Mrs. Charles Cranston.

(*Enter MRS. WALDEN, L. RUTH starts and puts down book.*)

MRS. WALDEN. So you have found your presents, Ruth?

(*Comes down c.*)

RUTH. Oh, mother, such a lovely bracelet! Just what I wanted. Thank you a thousand times! And the flowers are from Aunt Mary. And see, here is a book from Mr. Cranston.

MRS. W. And five birthday letters this morning. I think you have done very well. Did I hear you say Mr. Cranston was coming to-night?

RUTH. He said he would come to-night, if we were settled. Of course I said we should be.

MRS. W. I'm glad I finished this room at any rate, but we haven't put the dining-room curtains up yet.

RUTH. Never mind. Men never notice those things. Besides, I've found some lovely pink tulle for the center of the table and I'll put lilies of the valley in little silver vases all around. Oh, I feel as if something is going to happen to-night, something romantic and unexpected.

MRS. W. Because it is your birthday, foolish child.

RUTH. Well, partly. I always feel more important on my birthday.

MRS. W. That is natural. I remember when I did too, though it seems a long time ago.

RUTH. Sit down, mother. I want to show you something. (*They sit on lounge.*) When I was looking for the tulle in that old bureau I dropped a package of dusty old cards, and in picking them up I found this. (*Gives card.*)

MRS. W. (*reading*). Mr. Edward J. Meadows.

RUTH. But look on the back. That was what aroused my curiosity.

MRS. W. (*reading on back*). "With best wishes to Rosetta on her birthday, from Edward." (*Drops card.*) Oh, my dear, what old, old memories this calls up!

RUTH. Was he an old friend of yours, mother?

MRS. W. Yes, and his sister also. As a girl I spent many happy days at their home, Meadowlands. It's about ten miles from here.

RUTH. Oh, mother, how nice! Perhaps they'll come over to see us.

MRS. W. It's not likely. I haven't seen them for years. I fancy we quarreled—yes, we did, and about an old fence.

RUTH. About a fence? I can't imagine you quarreling about such a trifle, mother.

MRS. W. But it wasn't a trifle. It was a very substantial fence built to last for years, and I dare say it's there yet. There was a dispute about the boundary line which Mr. Moore won in a lawsuit. Mr. Meadows took it very much to heart. Some things I said incensed Laura and her brother. We drifted apart and Edward married soon after. I've never seen them since.

RUTH. And what about his neighbor, Mr. Moore?

MRS. W. The two old gentlemen died without forgiving one another, and the sons will probably do the same.

(*The door-bell rings. MRS. W. opens door R., admitting*

CHARLIE. RUTH goes to table and buries her face in the flowers.)

CHARLIE. Good-afternoon, Mrs. Walden. Is Miss Ruth at home?

MRS. W. Yes; come in, Mr. Cranston. Ruth——

(*CHARLIE comes down C.*)

RUTH (*turning*). How do you do, Mr. Cranston?

Thank you so much for your kind remembrance of my birthday. It was quite a surprise.

CHARLIE. Oh, it's just a trifle, Miss Ruth. I hope you'll enjoy the story and many, many more birthdays.

RUTH. Won't you stay to dinner, Mr. Cranston?

CHARLIE. Thank you; but I'm afraid that would be imposing upon your good nature. You're not settled yet.

MRS. W. Oh, one can do a good deal in three days, and we're fairly well settled down-stairs. So do stay.

CHARLIE. Well, then, I'll be delighted.

MRS. W. Then if you will excuse me, I shall leave Ruth to entertain you for a few minutes.

(Exit, L.)

RUTH. Our piano hasn't come yet, or I'd play something for you. Let's sit at the window and watch the automobiles go past.

(Both go to window.)

CHARLIE. Is it a favorite amusement of yours?

RUTH. Oh, no. I haven't had much time to look out of the window; we've been too busy. And all would be strangers to me. They would remind me that I am a new arrival in this neighborhood.

(They sit by window.)

CHARLIE. I suppose you miss your friends. But you'll soon make new ones.

RUTH. Indeed I do miss them. *(Auto horn is heard.)* Here's a motor now. It's a gray car. There's an elderly man driving. He's rather careful.

CHARLIE. Quite, but he made a lot of dust.

RUTH. Here's another coming. Oh, it's just a little runabout.

CHARLIE. Do you despise the little ones?

(An auto horn heard.)

RUTH. Oh, no, but I like big things best.

CHARLIE. Big houses, I suppose, and big incomes.

RUTH. I'm not unhappy, if I don't own them. But big things give one the idea of strength, don't they?

CHARLIE. Yes, and big fortunes are a power.

RUTH. But I'm not mercenary.

CHARLIE. Then you wouldn't mind living in a cottage, a modern cottage, of course, with all conveniences, as they say?

RUTH. It would depend upon whom I lived with.

CHARLIE. There's another—a red car.

RUTH. Oh, it's a beauty. I do love a bright red.

CHARLIE. By Jove, they're taking that hill at a reckless pace. They'd better look out for the old horse and buggy at the bottom.

RUTH. They're simply flying. There are two people in it—a man and a girl. (*Springs to her feet.*)

CHARLIE. What's the matter? (*The motor horn is sounded quickly several times.*) Good heavens, they'll run into that rig! (*Rises excitedly.*)

RUTH (*clutching CHARLIE'S arm*). Oh, stop them! Help! They'll all be killed! (*Screams. The horn is blown and shouts and cries are heard off c.*) Oh, she jumped—the girl jumped!

CHARLIE. Whew! That's the closest shave I ever saw. They just cleared that horse by an inch, and then only by ditching the machine. That driver's a young fool, but he kept his wits.

RUTH. I wonder if the girl is hurt. No, she is standing up. Now he's scolding her for jumping. You may be sure they're married, or he would never dare, when it was all his fault. The brute!

CHARLIE. It seems to me that she is quite able to defend herself. She's giving it to him.

RUTH. He deserves it. Oh, Charlie, she is limping. I beg your pardon. I called you Charlie by mistake.

CHARLIE (*fervently*). Oh, please don't beg my pardon. I wish you would always call me Charlie. Won't you?

RUTH. If you really like it better.

CHARLIE. I do. And may I call you — (*Suddenly.*) By Jove, it's Molly!

RUTH. Molly? Who is Molly?

CHARLIE. Who is Molly? Why, there's only one Molly—the charming Molly Meadows. That idiot Jack Lawrence is with her. It's Mr. Meadows' car. I know it well.

RUTH. She is leaning on his arm. She can't walk. I'll tell her to come in here. (*Leans out of window or goes to door R: and speaks earnestly:* "I'm afraid you're hurt.

Won't you come in ?") Yes, she is coming. She thanked me so sweetly, and with the loveliest smile.

(Goes to door R.)

(Enter MOLLY, limping, her hat tilted over one ear.)

MOLLY. It's so good of you to ask me in.

RUTH. I'm afraid you're hurt. Let me help you.

(They come down C.)

MOLLY. I've twisted my ankle, I think. Why, hello, Charlie!

CHARLIE. Molly, this is too bad. *(Assists her to sofa R.)*

MOLLY. Won't you introduce me?

CHARLIE. Certainly. Miss Meadows, Miss Walden.

RUTH. I have heard of you, Miss Meadows.

MOLLY. Have you? I think I can guess from whom. Charlie, would you mind untying my shoe?

RUTH. No, you're wrong. You haven't guessed right.

(CHARLIE stoops and unties shoe.)

CHARLIE. There, is that easier?

MOLLY. Thank you, Charlie.

(Enter MRS. W., L.)

MRS. W. Ruth, there's been an accident.

RUTH. Yes, mother. This is Miss Meadows; she was in it.

MRS. W. Miss Meadows!

MOLLY *(offering hand)*. I can't get up; I'm afraid I've hurt my foot.

MRS. W. Oh, I'm so sorry. Let me look at it.

(Bends over foot. RUTH at back of chair.)

RUTH. Won't you take off your hat, Miss Meadows?

(MOLLY removes hat and veil. RUTH places them on desk.)

MOLLY. I wonder where Jack is. Why doesn't he come?

(CHARLIE goes to window.)

CHARLIE. He can't come yet. He is being interviewed by a police officer. It looks very interesting.

MRS. W. How unfortunate to have had this happen! I suppose you were just out for a little spin.

MOLLY. Yes, we were going to spin on to New York and get married. Spin in haste and unravel at leisure.

RUTH (*awed*). Were you—eloping?

MOLLY. Yes, that's exactly what we were doing.

CHARLIE. Jack is coming.

MRS. W. Let me bathe your foot for you.

MOLLY. No, please don't mind. It's all right now that I have my shoe off.

(*Enter JACK, R.*)

JACK. Molly! (*Comes down R.*) Does your foot hurt much?

MOLLY. Jack, this is Mrs. Walden, and Miss Walden. They have been so kind. What kept you, Jack?

(*CHARLIE comes down C.*)

JACK. I was just being arrested.

MOLLY. Oh, is that all?

JACK. A policeman came up on horseback and took my name and the number of the car.

CHARLIE. What is the charge? Kidnapping?

JACK (*looking daggers at him*). Speeding.

MOLLY. If we end up in the police court that will be the limit. (*Laughs.*)

RUTH. How can you laugh?

MOLLY. Oh, Jack, the way of the eloper is hard.

MRS. W. Surely your good kind father——

MOLLY. You don't know him. He won't consent at all.

MRS. W. (*looking at JACK*). But why——

MOLLY. Because my older sister Laurie is still unmarried. That is his only reason, but he gives it as if it were really a good one. I've tried to get her married, but I've failed.

CHARLIE. So have I.

(*RUTH looks in astonishment at CHARLIE.*)

MOLLY. Then, as there seemed nothing else to do, we eloped. Jack, is the car disabled?

JACK. Not even scratched. I just ditched her in time.

MOLLY. Get her out of the ditch and we'll go on to New York.

MRS. W. Oh, think, my dear child, what you are doing.

JACK. There's no time to lose.

MOLLY (*rising and limping*). I'm coming.

MRS. W. Oh, Miss Meadows, let me persuade you to think first, to reflect —

(*A loud ring R. Excited voices are heard off stage.*)

MOLLY. What's that?

(*RUTH runs and opens door, R. Enter MR. M.*)

MR. M. She's here, my child is here. (*Comes down C.*)
Of course I knew my own motor at once.

MOLLY (*calmly*). Well, father.

(*Enter LAURIE and MISS M., R.*)

MR. M. Molly is here. (*Takes her in his arms.*)

LAURIE (*coming down C.*). Molly!

MISS M. Here's the runaway.

MRS. W. (*to RUTH*). Edward Meadows! How changed he is!

MR. M. Where's the scoundrel who took you off?

JACK (*R., standing up*). I'm the guilty party, Mr. Meadows.

(*LAURIE goes to MOLLY.*)

MR. M. What do you mean, sir, by running away with my daughter, and in my new motor? You have behaved infamously. (*Looks around, sees CHARLIE.*) What, are you in this, too? And these ladies, have they connived at this romantic elopement?

MRS. W. (*L.*). Oh, believe me —

MOLLY. I never saw them before to-day. And Charlie is perfectly innocent. We had an accident.

MR. M. An accident! Are you hurt?

MOLLY. A little, in my foot. It hurts when I am contradicted.

MR. M. (*to JACK*). So this is your work?

JACK (R.). Yes. I admit I'm in the wrong. I should never have persuaded Molly to elope. Whatever else may be said about it an elopement is an underhand act. But we wanted to be married, and we were tired of waiting for what seemed an unlikely—— (*Looks at LAURIE.*)

LAURIE. Really, Jack!

JACK. Or I should say a much postponed event. And do you think, sir, it is just to make us wait for some one else? Will you give your consent now to Molly's marrying me?

MR. M. No, I will not. I have my own methods, and I will not submit to be criticized by you, sir.

JACK. Sir, do you wish to force us to the other alternative?

MR. M. No, you can wait.

MOLLY. Poor Jack! It's hard luck. And right after being arrested, too.

LAURIE. Arrested? Oh, Jack!

MR. M. (C.). The graceless scamp. Serves him right.

MOLLY (*sighing*). I seem to do nothing but get people into trouble.

MISS M. Yes, your folly is responsible for this.

MOLLY. Bad, disgraceful little Molly. Everything she does is folly.

MRS. W. (*going to MR. M., C.*). You don't remember me, Edward—Mrs. Walden.

MR. M. Mrs. Walden? No, I'm afraid I have a poor memory. But wait a moment. You're very like some one I used to know years ago. Oh, impossible! You couldn't—cannot be Rosetta Lewis.

MRS. W. I was Rosetta Lewis.

MR. M. Rosetta! (*Takes her hands.*) Bless my soul! Is this so? Why, it's years ago.

MISS M. (*going to her*). Rosetta, don't you know me?

MRS. W. Why, Laura, of course. (*They embrace.*)

MR. M. This is an extraordinary meeting. It's like going back twenty-five years. Rosetta Lewis! Well, well, well!

MRS. W. Then you haven't altogether forgotten those old days, Edward? And you, Laura?

MISS M. Rosetta, I have been thinking of you quite recently. Partly, I think, because a very old friend of mine

turned up to-day, partly because we were speaking of something—which recalled you. And is this young lady ——

MRS. W. My daughter Ruth.

MR. M. Your daughter? (*Looks at her.*) Yes, you are like your mother. And yet you're not as much like her as she was —— I mean, she was different.

RUTH (*L., laughing*). Yes, I have always heard mother was very pretty, so of course I'm not like her.

MR. M. No, no, I didn't mean that. I had no idea you were living in this neighborhood.

MRS. W. We've only been here three days.

MR. M. But, Molly, how do you account for being here?

MOLLY. Through pure charity. Miss Walden thought I was injured and she asked me in.

(MISS M. *goes to window and looks out, waving hand from time to time*; MR. M. *up stage pacing back and forth.*)

MRS. W. Now you'll all stay to dinner and help celebrate Ruth's birthday. Oh, don't refuse.

MR. M. Impossible.

RUTH. Please do stay—everybody.

MOLLY. Is this your birthday?

RUTH. Yes. I am eighteen to-day.

MOLLY. Mine will be next week, and I shall be twenty then.

MRS. W. You are far too young to marry, my dear. I wouldn't hear of Ruth getting married for years.

RUTH. Oh, mother!

CHARLIE (*L.*). But, Mrs. Walden ——

(RUTH *looks down demurely*. LAURIE and MOLLY *stare at CHARLIE.*)

MISS M. I left a friend outside. He accompanied us, but would not come in.

MRS. W. Perhaps I could persuade him. Any friend of yours is welcome, Laura.

MISS M. No, he is quite obdurate. But if I wave my hand to him occasionally he won't be lonely.

(*Waves hand, and repeats this at intervals.*)

MOLLY. Now that we're all rested don't you think we had better go on to New York?

JACK. Why, Molly!

MOLLY. And father will come with us, of course. And Laurie and Miss Ruth.

JACK. Oh, let's take the whole town.

MR. M. Molly! You will come home with me and stay there.

MOLLY. Until Laurie is married?

LAURIE. Or dead. Why can't you leave me out of it? I'm tired of being told I am the cause of all your troubles, Molly.

MOLLY. Oh, it's not your fault, Laurie. It's mine, mine, mine.

MISS M. Oh, don't let us have a scene.

MR. M. When Jack has shown that he is capable of looking after you —

JACK. Give me a fair show, sir.

(*A ring r. RUTH goes to door and takes in envelope.*)

MR. M. We'll see, we'll see!

RUTH. For Mr. Lawrence.

JACK. A summons. (*Takes paper.*) Thank you.

MR. M. Ah, you're beginning brilliantly. A summons to appear in the police court.

JACK (*opening it*). For exceeding the speed limit. Why, I wasn't going more than five miles an hour.

CHARLIE. That's what they all say! But down that hill, Jack. Whew!

JACK. I'd like to punch his head.

(*Throws paper on table.*)

MOLLY (*going to him*). Oh, Jack, will they put you in jail?

JACK (*gloomily*). Quite likely.

MOLLY. Then I'll go with you.

MR. M. Nonsense! They'll fine him, and serve him right. (*Telephone rings off L.*)

RUTH. There's the telephone. I'll go, mother.

(*Exit, L.*)

MR. M. Don't expect me to pay your fine, sir.

JACK (*haughtily*). I don't expect it. I've got fifteen dollars of my own.

MR. M. Come, Molly.

MOLLY. My place is with Jack.

MRS. W. What spirit she has!

MR. M. Don't you dispute my authority, miss. I am surprised at you. Look at your sister Laurie; her obedience, her docility should be an example to you.

LAURIE. Oh, father!

(Reënter RUTH, L.)

RUTH. Miss Laura Meadows is wanted at the telephone. They tried to get you at home, and then they tried two or three of your friends, and finally Mrs. Armstrong, next door. She told them she saw you come in here. I think it is important.

LAURIE. I'll go at once. Excuse me.

(Exit, L.)

MR. M. Yes, Molly. When have you seen Laurie other than obedient and respectful? You are nearly three years younger. I expect you to be guided by her.

MISS M. Your father is right, Molly. If Laurie were married it would be quite a different matter. Even if I were married it might change things.

(Goes to window and waves hand, smiling.)

MRS. W. Won't your friend come in?

MISS M. He seems rather bashful—one of those gentle, retiring spirits. Men of genius are often like that.

MRS. W. A genius? What does he do?

MISS M. He is a musician—a composer.

(Reënter LAURIE, L., in great agitation.)

LAURIE (C.). Oh, father, I must go at once. I have had bad news. There has been an accident.

MISS M. Another accident! Who has been hurt?

LAURIE. Philip. He was thrown from his horse. They took him home and—he is unconscious. I must go.

MR. M. No, you shall not go, Laurie. Have you taken leave of your senses? You know that I have forbidden you to speak to Philip Moore.

LAURIE. Oh, that doesn't matter. He is hurt—you don't understand.

MR. M. I tell you I forbid it. Your place is at home with me.

LAURIE. Let me go, father. My place is with Philip, with my husband.

MR. M. (*starting back*). Your husband!

MOLLY. Her husband! Then you are married!

LAURIE. Yes, we have been married for over two months. (MR. M. *drops into a chair*.) Oh, forgive me, father. I must go to him. He is injured, perhaps seriously.

MOLLY. Why didn't you tell me this, Laurie?

LAURIE. I meant to, but I was afraid, and I kept putting it off. Oh, I mustn't delay any longer. Charlie, will you drive me there? I saw your car outside. Please.

CHARLIE. Of course I will, Laurie. Come, we won't lose any time. (*To RUTH*.) I'll be back to-night.

(*Exeunt CHARLIE and LAURIE, R.*)

MOLLY. Who would have dreamed of Laurie doing such a thing?

MISS M. It is inconceivable.

(*Goes to window and beckons*.)

MOLLY. Her obedience, her docility. (*Laughs*.) Oh, Laurie, Laurie!

(*Motor horn heard off R., diminishing as though going away*.)

MR. M. I shall never forgive her.

MRS. W. Oh, Edward!

MISS L. He is coming, my friend is coming.

(*RUTH goes to door R.*)

MR. M. (L.). No, I can't forgive her.

MISS M. (L.). We all have our disappointments, Edward.

(*Enter BROWN, R.*)

RUTH. Mother, here's the piano tuner, but our piano hasn't come yet.

MISS M. Piano tuner! Why, he's my friend, Mr. Napoleon Alexander Brown.

RUTH. I—I never knew his name.

MISS M. Do you tune pianos? Tell me the truth, Alexander. Is that what you meant when you said you were a musician?

BROWN. It is, Laura. I said I played my own compositions, and that I made them up as I went along. That's quite true.

MISS M. Oh, you have deceived me! I cannot forgive you. (*Drops on sofa and holds handkerchief to eyes.*)

BROWN. Laura!

MISS M. Never!

(BROWN *drops into a chair, R., and holds his head in his hands.*)

JACK (*beside MOLLY*). Laurie married! That means liberty for us.

MOLLY. Yes. (*Goes to MR. M.*) Father, you know what you said. And now that Laurie is married you'll give your consent——

MR. M. (*jumping up*). Laurie married! But she's not married. No, no—to Sam Moore's son! It is insufferable. I can't—I won't look upon her as his wife! I shall never forgive her!

(*Exit, R.*)

MOLLY. Then it's up to me to do something. I'll find a way out. (*Puts on hat and ties on veil with a business-like air. JACK goes to her.*) No, not with you, Jack, this time. All alone. It's only a step to the station. I'll write you, Jack.

MISS M. (*sharply*). Where are you going?

MOLLY. Somewhere else. It's not very cheerful here. (BROWN *groans.*) Expect me back in three days.

JACK } (*starting up*). Three days!

MISS M. }

MOLLY (*going R.*). I have a fancy to visit an old school-friend. Don't worry.

JACK. Molly!

MOLLY. Good-bye, Jack. Don't follow me. Good-bye, everybody. I'll find a way.

(*Exit MOLLY, R., still limping a little.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—*Same as Act I. Time, three days later.*

(*Upon rise Miss M. enters carrying a large iced cake. She puts it on table, L., and looks at it on one side, then another, finally covering it with a white napkin. Takes a letter from pocket and reads it. Enter LAURIE, L. C. She comes rather timidly into the room.*)

LAURIE. Aunt Laura !

MISS M. Oh, Laurie, my dear girl ! (*Embraces her.*)

LAURIE. I just slipped across to see you for a minute.

MISS M. Oh, Laurie, how strange it is to think of you living next door.

LAURIE. It's so convenient. I—I came through a hole in the fence.

MISS M. Oh, that boundary fence ! (*Looks off through door L. C. and sighs.*) It has been the cause of so much unhappiness. (*With energy.*) I'd like to chop it down ! Well, have you heard from Molly ?

LAURIE. Yes, I had a letter. But she said nothing except that she was coming home to-day and wanted Phil and me to come over.

MISS M. There was no news in mine, either, and I should have been worried if Jack hadn't been over the day before yesterday and said we had no cause to be uneasy. He seemed highly delighted, and kept saying, "It'll be all right. Molly is bound to succeed." But her father is annoyed.

LAURIE. Do you think father will ever—forgive me ?

MISS M. I don't know. He didn't mention your name until at breakfast this morning, when he said—what do you think ?

LAURIE (*eagerly*). What ?

MISS M. "I miss Laurie's waffles." But don't be too hopeful. It just seemed to slip out. You know you've been very disobedient.

LAURIE (*with dignity*). Aunt Laura, I am a married woman !

MISS M. Well, well—how is Philip ?

LAURIE. Much better.

MISS M. Was he really badly hurt?

LAURIE. His arm was hurt, and he has a bad cut over his left eyebrow. The doctor put in six stitches. But I think it will heal without leaving a scar. I expected father to show a little sympathy. Philip might have been killed, for all he knew.

MISS M. Hush; you mustn't tell, for your father would be most annoyed with me, but he sent John over yesterday to ask your gardener how Philip was getting on.

LAURIE. Oh, he does care!

MISS M. But don't imagine he has forgiven you, my dear. I can't hold out any hope of that.

LAURIE. I know, I know. I wish Molly could do something. I wonder if she will really come to-day.

MISS M. Oh, she must. Why, it's her birthday. See what I've prepared. (*Shows cake.*) Isn't that a beauty?

LAURIE. Lovely. I'd like to taste it.

MISS M. No, you must wait. (*Re-covers it.*)

LAURIE. Aunt Laura, have you seen anything more of your old friend Mr. Napoleon Alexander Brown?

MISS M. Don't speak of him, Laurie. I don't wish to see him or hear of him again. I haven't laid eyes on him since he confessed himself a piano tuner.

LAURIE. A piano tuner! When did you find that out?

MISS M. At the Waldens' the other day after you had gone. Think how I've been deceived!

LAURIE. But after all, it's an honest trade. When you see him again——

MISS M. I shall never see him again—never!

LAURIE. Never's a long time, auntie. Cheer up. Well, I'm going back through the hole in that awful fence, but we'll be here at five o'clock without fail.

(*Exit, L. C. Miss M. goes to table, looks at cake and re-covers it hastily as she hears a step.*)

(*Enter BROWN, R. C. He has a fresh flower in his button-hole, wears an old silk hat, and carries some flowers in his hand.*)

BROWN. Laura! (*She turns her back. BROWN comes down c.*) Oh, Laura, if you but knew how you had made me suffer!

MISS M. (*turning suddenly*). I made you suffer ! Well, that's good. Of all the ironic statements ! Napoleon Alexander Brown, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. You don't live up to your name at all.

BROWN. What have I done, Laura, to turn such a gentle, amiable woman, a household angel, I may say, into an accusing Katherine ?

MISS M. It's all very well for you to take that attitude, Alexander, but you have deceived me basely.

BROWN. I deceived you, Laura ? Never. That is—not intentionally. My language perhaps was misleading. I did not perhaps choose the right word.

MISS M. I have lost faith in you, Alexander.

BROWN (*sadly*). And I have always kept my faith in you, Laura. Will you accept these flowers as a little token of my regard ?

MISS M. I don't wish to be too hard on you, Alexander. (*Takes flowers.*) What beautiful flowers ! They are like nothing we grow at Meadowlands.

BROWN. Strange ! For I picked them just outside the door.

MISS M. What ? You ——

BROWN. I did not intend coming again, but the letter changed my plans.

MISS M. What letter ?

BROWN. Why, the letter I received telling me to be here to-day at five without fail. Did you not write it ?

MISS M. Certainly not. Where is it ?

BROWN. I have it with me. (*Shows letter.*)

MISS M. Molly's writing. She is very fond of writing letters. It is a little way of hers to arrange other people's affairs.

BROWN. Perhaps you would rather I did not stay.

MISS M. No, you must stay now that you have come on purpose.

BROWN (*going up c.*). The world is very hard.

MISS M. Alexander—please stay.

BROWN (*returning to her*). The world is hard, but I look for sympathy from the woman I love.

MISS M. Love—you love ?

BROWN (*dropping on his knees*). I love you only, Laura. (*Takes her hand.*) As I always did. Will you marry me ?

(*Enter JACK, R. C.*)

JACK. Aunt Laura, a letter from Molly to-day.

(*Waves letter. BROWN jumps up.*)

BROWN. Confound that boy!

JACK. Oh, I beg your pardon! I'm sorry.

MISS M. Don't go, Jack. I—we—you know Mr. Napoleon Alexander Brown and I are very old friends.

JACK. Of course.

BROWN. And in case our young friend might misinterpret the position in which he found us when he entered so unexpectedly —

JACK. My fault, I know. I should have knocked.

BROWN. I will explain to him frankly and as man to man, that I was in that apparently humble attitude for the purpose of offering my hand to this lady, Miss Laura Meadows.

JACK. Oh, then I'll go. But I just want to say, Aunt Laura, that in my opinion everybody should marry. Now I'm off to the train to meet Molly.

(*Exit, R. C.*)

BROWN. Well, Laura, what do you say? Am I to hope?

MISS M. I think, I really believe Jack is right, Alexander. (*He kisses her hand.*) Oh, you make me feel young again.

(*Reënter JACK, R. C. MISS M. gives a little scream.*)

JACK. I forgot to tell you that Molly told me to order the ice-cream and plenty of it, so I sent ten quarts.

(*Exit, R. C.*)

MISS M. Ten quarts of ice-cream! Has Molly asked the whole population? Oh, what a girl!

BROWN. But let us consider our own affairs while we can. When shall we get married, dearest?

MISS M. Whenever you like, Alexander. I suppose you do not know, but I think I should tell you that I have a little income—just a thousand dollars a year of my own. Of course I know it's not enough to prove a temptation to any one, but it makes me feel quite independent.

BROWN. I'm glad to hear that, my dear Laura, very glad for your sake. (*Earnestly.*) Now do not on any account settle that little sum on me—I will not allow it.

MISS M. Make yourself easy on that point, Alexander. I have no intention of settling it on you. It is to be kept for emergencies.

(*A ring R. C. Enter CHARLIE.*)

CHARLIE. Good-afternoon, Miss Meadows. Mr. Brown. (*Bows.*) I've had a letter from Molly, the most delightful letter. It's full of her plans. (*Takes it out of pocket.*)

MISS M. So have I a letter. But mine was not to be shown to any one.

CHARLIE. Neither was mine. (*Replaces letter.*) But I can tell you one thing, She asked me to order some angel cakes, so I telephoned the baker to leave six large ones. The angel!

MISS M. Six angel cakes! But look here what I've made.

(*Shows cake.*)

CHARLIE. I hope I haven't upset your plans.

MISS M. It doesn't matter. We shall have to live on cake for a day or two.

CHARLIE. No, we'll eat them up, never fear.

MISS M. Well, I should like to know who is coming.

CHARLIE. All Molly's friends, I guess. I know of one who is to be here at five o'clock, and she is the dearest girl in the world. (*Confidentially.*) I'm engaged, Miss Laura.

MISS M. Really, Mr. Cranston? How pleased I am. So am I.

CHARLIE. So are you what?

MISS M. I am also engaged to be married; I and Mr. Brown.

CHARLIE. I see. (*To BROWN.*) My congratulations! (*To MISS M.*) My warmest wishes. Now I'm off to meet her. I hope you will like her. But you couldn't help it.

(*Exit, R. C.*)

(*BROWN and MISS M. sit on sofa.*)

MISS M. How enthusiastic he is! And every one is getting married, it seems. I hope Molly doesn't elope

again, but one never knows what she is going to do next. I wish she would come.

BROWN. She will be here soon. Don't worry.

MISS M. It's all very well to say "don't worry," but I'm sure something has happened. Why isn't she here? She ought to be here by now. I believe I'll send a telegram. (*Rises.*) But where shall I send it? Jack is the only one who seems to know her whereabouts.

(*Enter JACK, R. C.*)

JACK (*blankly*). Molly hasn't come!

MISS M. Molly hasn't come! (*Sits down.*) How do you know, Jack? What do you mean?

JACK. I've just been down. The train came in all right, but Molly wasn't on board.

MISS M. There! I knew something had happened to her.

JACK. I don't know what to think.

MISS M. Oh, dear, oh, dear, perhaps I shall never see her again.

BROWN. Come, come, Laura, you must look on the bright side.

(MISS M. *buries her face in her hands.* BROWN *strolls over to table, lifts napkin and looks at cake, breaks off a little piece of icing and eats it.* JACK *beside MISS M., with his back to door.*)

MISS M. Oh, what shall I do? What shall I tell her father? (*Enter MOLLY, L. C. She carries a suit-case.*) Molly, Molly, where are you?

MOLLY. Here I am! (*Drops suit-case and runs to her.*)

JACK. Molly!

(BROWN *hastily re-covers cake.*)

MISS M. Molly, you wretch! I thought something dreadful had happened to you.

JACK. I went down to the depot to meet you. Where were you, Molly?

MOLLY. Will you all forgive me if I tell you that I have been very successful?

MISS M. What did you do? What venture?

MOLLY. You will all know presently. Jack, I didn't come by train. I met the Martins in New York at the ferry and

they were in their motor and offered to drive me home. So they dropped me at the gate. Poor Jack, were you disappointed?

JACK. Disappointed isn't the word. You mustn't go off again like this by yourself, Molly. Just when I thought I was going to have a honeymoon, too. It's not fair, is it, Aunt Laura?

MISS M. No, Molly, it is not fair to Jack—or to any of us.

MOLLY. Oh, but we'll have a real honeymoon soon, and the wedding will start with a trousseau. And there will be bridesmaids and a best man and a reception. And a sky-scraper cake with a white cupid on top.

BROWN. Very expensive. I wouldn't dream of having such a wedding.

MISS M. But it's not for you to say, Alexander. Now, Molly, tell me, what was your mysterious errand?

MOLLY. You'll know in time, Aunt Laura. I've got some surprises. One is in the suit-case.

JACK. What is it?

MOLLY. It's a dress, a dream of a dress. Oh, Jack, when you see it you'll certainly sit up. Madame Louise was making it for to-day, but I wouldn't trust her to send it. I stopped over in New York to bring it home with me—and something else.

MISS M. Oh, I remembered what day this is, and see what I've made for you, Molly. (*Shows cake.*)

MOLLY. A birthday cake. What a beauty! Thank you, Aunt Laura. It would almost do for a wedding cake. How long would it keep?

JACK. Now, Molly —

MOLLY. I'm glad it's a large one. I've written to everybody, father included, to come to my birthday party.

BROWN. I accept your kind invitation with much pleasure.

MOLLY. Very pleased to see you, sir. And at this birthday party it is the hostess who will give the presents—to make amends for all the trouble she's caused.

JACK. Nonsense! You're an angel, Molly.

MOLLY. Aunt Laura, where is father?

MISS M. He went out some time ago.

MOLLY. But it's most important that I should know when he will be back.

JACK. Not for a while, I guess. I saw him at the post-office on my way up.

MOLLY. That's good. Aunt Laura, will you be kind enough to meet him outside the gate and detain him for a little while?

MISS M. But, Molly, why don't you want him here?

MOLLY. Not too soon. Oh, I have a good reason, Aunt Laura.

JACK. She has a splendid reason, Aunt Laura.

BROWN. Come, we'll take a little walk, Laura.

MOLLY. Now that's good of you, Mr. Brown. I knew you'd help me.

MISS M. Very well. But don't expect me to stay away too long. I'm very curious.

(Exeunt MISS M. and BROWN, R. C.)

MOLLY. Are they engaged, too?

JACK. Of course.

MOLLY. How unoriginal!

(JACK goes to MOLLY and kisses her.)

JACK. Many happy returns of your birthday, my Molly! I'm going to give you twenty kisses—and one to grow on.

MOLLY. Not just now, Jack. I haven't time.

JACK. Well, did you see him—Philip's father?

MOLLY. Did I! Yes, indeed, and he's a dear. He didn't eat me up as I'd been led to expect from the stories I've heard all my life. And he's delighted with everything.

(They sit together.)

JACK. What a daring little thing you are!

MOLLY. Oh, I was even more daring. Guess whom I saw in New York?

JACK. I haven't any idea.

MOLLY. Your uncle, Jack.

JACK. Molly—you never went to see him!

MOLLY. Yes, I did.

JACK. Without consulting me! Oh, Molly, why did you do that? I know your intentions were good. But I wish you hadn't gone, dear. Well, I suppose he had nothing good to say for me.

MOLLY. He said you could report at the office at nine o'clock to-morrow.

JACK. Molly, you're joking.

MOLLY. No, honor bright. All is forgiven. I took him into our secret, and he was so nice to me. I love him already. I called him Uncle Jack. And he kissed me good-bye and said he had a fine proposition to make to you.

JACK. Oh, who could resist you—you little witch? And you did this for me!

MOLLY. And for myself. You'll go?

JACK. Of course I'll go.

MOLLY. And mind you're on time. Now, that's settled. I want you to do something before father comes back. Go down to the boundary fence and loosen all the posts that aren't already shaky. John will help you.

JACK. Is it all right?

MOLLY. Yes; I take the responsibility, or rather Mr. Moore does. Don't pull it down, but get it all ready to pull down in a moment. Tell John to stay there, and when I signal to him from an up-stairs window he must knock it flat.

JACK. Very well. I won't know the place without that old fence, but I'll be glad to see the last of it.

(*Exit, L. C.*)

(*Enter CHARLIE, R. C.*)

CHARLIE. Hello, here's the runaway.

MOLLY. Yes, here I am, safe and sound. Oh, it seems good to be home again.

CHARLIE. And I'm glad to see you back, Molly. I have a confession to make.

MOLLY. What is it? I won't be very hard on you.

CHARLIE. I'm engaged.

MOLLY. I'm not surprised. Every one I know is—or going to be except father.

CHARLIE. You can't even be sure of him. Oh, not that I know anything. Well, can you guess the name of my fiancée?

MOLLY. Yes, I think I can. Is it—Ruth Walden?

CHARLIE. Right, but how did you know?

MOLLY. Because I have my eyes open. I'm so glad it's Ruth. I liked her ever so much. Oh, I hope you will be very, very happy! But here she is coming up the drive

with her mother. They evidently received my letter, all right. (*Goes L.*)

CHARLIE. Well, I declare, so she is. Won't you stay and meet her, Molly?

MOLLY. No, not yet. I won't meet any one until I get into my new gown. But tell them I have arrived, and will be down as quickly as possible. Look out for surprises to-day.

(*Exit, L., with suit-case.*)

(*Enter RUTH, R. C.*)

CHARLIE. Ruth. (*Goes to her and kisses her.*)

RUTH. Dear Charlie. (*They come down C.*) Where's Molly?

CHARLIE. She will be here presently. I was just speaking to her.

RUTH. Oh, Charlie, did you tell her?

CHARLIE. I did.

RUTH. And what did she say?

CHARLIE. She said, "I hope you will be very, very happy."

RUTH. I like Molly.

CHARLIE. But where is your mother?

RUTH. She stopped to look at that ugly high fence, and told me to run on. It seemed to upset her.

CHARLIE. Of course. She is one of its contemporaries—I understand.

(*Enter MRS. W., L. C.*)

MRS. W. Oh, Ruth, after all these years I've seen the fence again.

RUTH. It's only an ordinary fence, mother.

MRS. W. Ordinary! My dear Ruth, it's not a fence. It's a tragedy. It is what made Mr. Moore and Mr. Meadows bitter enemies, estranged their children, destroyed our friendship and now has separated father and daughter. Don't call that an ordinary fence. I could tear it down.

CHARLIE. Time will do that, Mrs. Walden.

MRS. W. Oh, time is too slow.

(*Enter LAURIE, L. C.*)

LAURIE. How do you do, Mrs. Walden—and Miss Ruth? Charlie, how are you? Is father here?

CHARLIE. I haven't seen him yet.

LAURIE (*looking out c.*). Come in, Phil.

(*Enter PHILIP, L. C. He has a piece of court plaster across his eyebrow and one arm in a sling.*)

CHARLIE. Phil, I'm glad to see you up again.

PHILIP. Thanks, Charlie. I'm glad to find I'm alive and whole.

LAURIE. Mrs. Walden, my husband. Miss Walden.

PHILIP. How do you do? (*Shakes hands.*)

RUTH (*to CHARLIE*). Shall we tell her—the secret?

CHARLIE. Yes, why not? Mrs. Moore will be interested to hear of it, I'm sure.

LAURIE. You excite my curiosity. What will I be interested to hear of?

CHARLIE. Of my engagement to Miss Walden. Don't you think I'm a lucky man?

LAURIE. You engaged to Miss Walden? How extraordinary!

RUTH. Do you think so?

LAURIE. Oh, not because he is engaged to you. That's lovely. And I hope you'll be very happy, Miss Walden.

(*Stares at RUTH.*)

RUTH (*rather coolly*). Thank you.

LAURIE. But where is Aunt Laura? She ought to be here. And Molly.

MRS. W. I think your aunt's time is very much occupied just now with an old friend. One can hardly blame her.

(*Enter BROWN, R. C.*)

BROWN. Has any one seen Miss Meadows?

CHARLIE. No, sir. We thought she was with you.

BROWN. She was, until, unhappily, a slight difference in our opinions seemed to point to the advantage of a temporary separation. I never quarrel.

MRS. W. You are very wise, Mr. Brown. But I dare say your little difference of opinion was not serious.

BROWN. It was about the fence.

MRS. W. Ah! the fence.

BROWN. I wanted to speak to Mr. Meadows about the

advisability of replacing it with one of stone. It looks so shaky, as if it might come down any minute.

MRS. W. (*rising*). And a stone fence would practically last forever! What a suggestion! Oh, you don't understand, Mr. Brown.

(*Enter JACK, L. C.*)

JACK. Where's Molly? Isn't she down yet? Hello, Phil, how are you? Mrs. Walden, I'm glad to see you again. And Miss Walden. (*Goes to LAURIE.*) Molly must be making a wonderful toilet.

LAURIE. Tell me, Jack, was Molly's mission really worth while?

JACK. You wait and see. But I think you'll say it was, anyway.

(*Enter MISS M., R. C.*)

MISS M. My dear Rosetta! How delighted I am to see you here again. (*To RUTH.*) Welcome to Meadowlands!

(*Enter MR. M., R. C.*)

LAURIE. Father! (*Goes to him.*) Will you forgive me?

MR. M. If you are prepared to stay at home as my daughter.

(*LAURIE turns away and MRS. W., much affected, goes to window. Suddenly a crash is heard off C.*)

MRS. W. (*with a scream*). The fence! The fence has fallen down!

(*MR. M., MISS M., and RUTH run to door L. C.*)

MR. M. Impossible! Who—what can have done this?

JACK. It made a fine smash! (*To PHILIP.*) No need of getting through holes now, Phil.

MR. M. I will have it put up again at once.

(*Enter MOLLY, wearing a new gown.*)

MOLLY. It will never be put up again, father.

MR. M. Molly! What tomfoolery is this?

MOLLY. The fence must never be put up again. Now, father, you will forgive Laurie. Oh, you can't refuse, because her father in-law has forgiven her for marrying Phil.

MR. M. What do you mean?

MOLLY. Mr. Moore told me so.

PHILIP. You saw my father?

MOLLY. Yes, and I think he is the dearest old gentleman in the world—next to my father, when he's amiable. He sent you a letter, sir. (*Gives letter to MR. M.*) And to you, Phil, he sent this. (*One to PHILIP.*) And this to you, Laurie. (*Letter to LAURIE. All open letters.*) These are my birthday gifts to you, and I hope you'll enjoy them.

MR. M. A letter from Sam. We used to be such friends. (*MISS M. makes a move to go to him.*) Rosetta, what do you think?

(*He goes to MRS. W. MISS M. turns away and encounters BROWN, who slips her arm in his.*)

PHILIP. Laurie, a check from my father. A check signed by him and a note to say I can fill in any amount up to ten thousand. Isn't he a brick? My fortune's made.

LAURIE. And I have such a nice letter. He calls me "daughter."

(*MR. M. goes to PHILIP and shakes hands with him.*)

MR. M. Philip, I've been too hard. Your father has taught me a lesson. (*Kisses LAURIE.*)

JACK. And what about Molly? Isn't she a brick? Where would you all be but for her? And where I'd be, goodness knows!

MISS M. Molly's methods are impulsive, but her heart's all right.

JACK (*his arm around MOLLY*). And it's mine.

MOLLY. All yours.

CHARLIE. Captivating little Molly.

Everything she does is jolly.

MOLLY. And now, father, may I marry Jack?

MR. M. Of course. Take her, Jack, and good luck to you. Molly's way is all right.

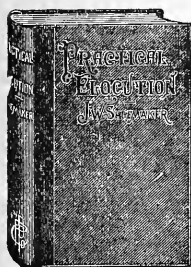
TABLEAU

LAURIE PHILIP MISS M. BROWN
MRS. W. MR. M. MOLLY JACK RUTH CHARLIE

CURTAIN



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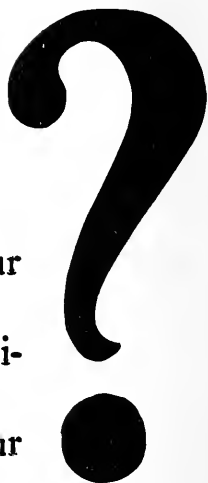
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